

Child and Family Services Reviews

Statewide Assessment With Built-In Instructions

**Children's Bureau
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Introduction

The child and family services reviews, regulated by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and facilitated by the Social Security Act Amendments of 1994, are designed to support a stronger Federal-State partnership in improving the outcomes of services to children and families. The review strategy seeks to achieve this by linking review of State child and family services to joint planning and technical assistance and emphasizing continuous improvement in State child welfare systems. The reviews include three outcome domains that cover the continuum of child welfare services: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being, as well as an examination of State and local agency characteristics that affect the achievement of positive outcomes.

This instrument, “Child and Family Services Reviews: Statewide Assessment,” is completed in the first stage of the review process by the State, in consultation with State representatives external to the State agency and ACF Regional and Central Office staff. The second stage of the review process is an onsite review, conducted by a team of State and Federal representatives, peer reviewers, and external reviewers. “Child and Family Services Reviews: Onsite Review Instrument” is used for the onsite case reviews, and the Stakeholder Interview Guide is used for the onsite stakeholder interviews. Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review is used to make determinations about the States’ substantial conformity with the State plan and other program requirements under review.

Section I of the statewide assessment requests general information about the State agency. Section II focuses on State child welfare agency characteristics and requires narrative responses on systemic factors, based on data to the extent available to the State. Section III includes data profiles for the safety and permanency outcomes, including the statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity. Section IV requires a narrative assessment of the outcome areas based on the data profiles in section III. Section V requires the State to assess its strengths and needs and identify issues and locations for further examination through the onsite review. The data profiles in section III are based on the Adoption Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data that are provided by the ACF to the State when the State initiates the statewide assessment.

The statewide assessment must be completed in collaboration with State representatives who are not staff of the State agency, pursuant to 45 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1355.33 (b). Those individuals should represent the sources of consultation required of the State in developing its title IV-B State plan. The names of external representatives who participated in developing the statewide assessment must be listed in section V of the instrument.

The instrument is available electronically through the Children's Bureau Web site at [<www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb>](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb).

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 240 hours for the initial review and 120 hours for subsequent reviews. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, completing the assessment, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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Statewide Assessment Instrument

Section I - General Information

Name of State Agency	
Period Under Review	
Federal Fiscal Year for Onsite Review Sample _____ Period of AFCARS Data _____ Period of NCANDS Data (or other approved source; please specify alternative data source) _____	
State Agency Contact Person for the Statewide Assessment	
Name:	_____
Title:	_____
Address:	_____

Phone	() - Fax () -
E-Mail	

INSTRUCTION

The Statewide Assessment is the first phase of the review process. It provides States with the opportunity to examine data relating to their programs and to consider the data in light of programmatic goals and outcomes for children and families served by the State. The Statewide Assessment requires State review team members to consider the State's success in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-

being. Moreover, through the Statewide Assessment process, a State can identify areas in which it is performing well and areas that need further examination through the onsite review.

Statewide Assessment Process

States should use the following steps in completing the Statewide Assessment:

1. Identify key agency staff and community representatives (such as those serving on the title IV-B planning committee) to serve on the State review team and to participate in the Statewide Assessment. (Agency staff should be selected on the basis of their expertise, for example, in quality assurance or foster care. External partners should be selected with a focus on ensuring representation of organizations and agencies with an array of service delivery mechanisms and perspectives on the State agency's practices.)
2. Examine existing State documents that provide information about the State agency during the period under review that might be useful in completing the Statewide Assessment. (The review team, for example, would look for descriptive and evaluative data in the title IV-B plan, management reports, studies, commission reports, and task force findings.)
3. Receive and analyze the data provided by the Children's Bureau through the Administration for Children and Families Regional Office (including consulting with non-review team members, as appropriate):
 - § Review the statewide aggregate data related to each outcome in the Onsite Review Instrument and identify areas of strength or the need for further examination during the onsite review, and the reason(s) for the status of the data indicators.
 - § Compare the State's performance on statewide aggregate data with the national standards, where applicable. States will need to address indicators that fall below the national standards in a Program Improvement Plan. It is important therefore for States to identify the factors affecting these indicators.
4. Consult with external stakeholders.

The State should consult with stakeholders regarding data indicators. For example, the team conducting the Statewide Assessment might talk with caseworkers and foster parents about the number of placement settings experienced by children. The States also will consult with stakeholders to obtain information to complete the narrative sections of the Statewide Assessment on systemic factors.

States are encouraged to use a variety of approaches in consulting with external stakeholders. The agency might gather information, for example, through the following:

- § Holding focus groups with stakeholders or consumer groups
- § Conducting surveys

- § Hosting joint planning forums within the State
- § Developing other strategies for linking the Statewide Assessment to the ongoing consultation process used for title IV-B planning

The exploratory issues provided on the following Statewide Assessment With Built-In Instructions may be used to analyze key issues and to consult with stakeholders regarding the systemic factors under review. The questions are intended to provide States with guidance for completing the assessment and are not intended to impose additional requirements on the States. States also may access technical assistance from the Federal Government in planning for and conducting the Statewide Assessment.

Format of the Statewide Assessment

A completed Statewide Assessment should be approximately 75–85 pages. States should use the Statewide Assessment form provided and avoid attaching other documents, whenever possible. The Statewide Assessment should contain the following:

- § Brief description of the agency structure and programs
- § Information about the relationship between the data and the State’s practices and policies
- § Information on the effectiveness of the systemic factor being reviewed
- § State data profile

For each Systemic Factor, the State should provide the following:

- § Overview of the system under review, including the requirements, structure, law, policy, and functions
- § Information on how well the systems work, including strengths, gaps, needs, and usefulness
- § Information on how the State's functioning in each systemic area affects the outcomes of safety, permanence, and well-being
- § Information on ongoing processes or mechanisms, such as the State’s quality assurance system, that routinely examine the effectiveness of the systemic factor and promote continuous improvement in that area

It is important that completed Statewide Assessments clearly show an analysis of the relationship between State data and practice, and the quality/effectiveness of the system under review. If a State’s data show that children have frequent re-entries into care following reunification, for example, the State should use the Statewide Assessment process to explore, and then document, the possible reasons that this is occurring. To do so, the State might examine the availability, accessibility, and quality of services to support family reunification. Or, if the State’s data show that children wait long periods for permanent placements, the State might explore the case review system and its effectiveness in moving children to permanency in a timely manner.

Section II - Systemic Factors

A. Statewide Information System Capacity

1. Discuss how effectively the State is able to meet the State plan requirement that it operates a Statewide information system that can determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care in the State. In responding, consider the accessibility of this information to State managers and local staff and the usefulness of the information in carrying out the agency's responsibilities.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the capacity and quality of the agency's statewide automated child welfare information system:

- State's data collection procedures and requirements
- Tracking capacity (program or case management areas/information, and status, demographics, location, and permanency goals for children in foster care)
- State approaches to using the data (for example, for planning and management purposes)
- Reporting capacity (types of reports generated and who within the agency is using and for what)
- System accessibility (to staff)
- Lessons learned about the system during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the system's operational capacity and data (accuracy and currency)
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

B. Case Review System

1. How effectively is the State able to meet the requirement that each child in foster care under the State's placement and care responsibility have a written case plan with all the required elements?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to meet the requirement that children in foster care have comprehensive written case plans:

- State's case plan policy requirements (for example, attention to safety and health issues, timeframes, schedules for developing and updating, and type of case planning meetings)
- Case plan contents (for example, documenting the link between the assessment of needs, services planned, expected outcomes, and the timeframes anticipated to achieve those outcomes)
- Policies and practices for ensuring that case plan requirements reflect a family-centered approach to child welfare
- System for measuring compliance with case plan requirements (for example, that every child has a current case plan that was developed within the timeframes required)
- Lessons learned about case planning during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's case planning
- Promising practices in this area

2. How effectively is the State able to meet the case review system requirement that parents of children in foster care participate in developing the child's case plan? In responding, consider their participation in activities such as identifying strengths and needs, determining goals, requesting specific services and evaluating progress related to their children.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's ability to engage the parents of children in foster care in case plan development:

- State definition of "family involvement" in case planning (for example, the role of family members in identifying their strengths and needs, determining goals, requesting services, and evaluating progress)
- Policies and practices to engage families in case planning (for example, methods for supporting family attendance at case planning sessions, such as providing transportation or offering flexible meeting times and locations)
- Methods for engaging both parents in case planning (including new efforts to involve fathers)
- State's capacity to engage all families (from all types of circumstances) in case planning
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about efforts to engage parents in case planning
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's efforts to engage families in case planning (for example, the degree and frequency of family involvement)
- Promising practices in this area

3. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effectively the State is meeting the requirement that the status of each child in foster care be reviewed periodically, i.e., at least every 6 months, by a court or by administrative review.

Examine the permanency data for the State and discuss how case reviews are affecting permanency outcomes for children. Then, using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to meet the requirement that the status of each child in foster care be reviewed periodically by a court or administrative review:

- Policies and practice for conducting reviews (how often and by whom)
- Method for ensuring that reviews are held within the timeframe required
- Procedure(s) for supporting biological and foster family attendance at/participation in the hearings (for example, system of notification or provision of transportation)
- Anticipated outcome(s) of the case review process
- System for tracking case review outcomes (for example, monitoring the provision of recommended services to a child or family)
- Lessons learned about the review process during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's review process
- Promising practices in this area

4. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how the State meets the requirement that permanency hearings for children in foster care occur within prescribed timeframes. Discuss the effectiveness of these hearings in promoting the timely and appropriate achievement of permanency goals for children.

Examine the permanency data for the State and discuss how the permanency hearings are affecting permanency outcomes for children. Then, using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to meet the requirement that permanency hearings for children in foster care occur within prescribed timeframes:

- State policies and procedures for meeting the permanency hearing requirement
- Methods for ensuring that hearings are held within the timeframe required
- Methods for tracking that the requirements are met for each child
- Anticipated outcome(s) of the hearing process
- System for tracking hearing outcomes (for example, tracking the action taken in response to a recommendation to terminate parental rights)
- Lessons learned about the permanency hearing process during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's permanency hearing process
- Promising practices in this area

5. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how the State meets the requirement to provide foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care with notice of and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child in their care.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to meet the requirement to provide foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care with the opportunity to be heard during any review or hearing held regarding a child in their care:

- State policies and procedures for meeting the requirement
- System for notifying caregivers of a review or hearing
- System for tracking attendance of caregivers at reviews or hearings
- Method for soliciting caregiver input during the review or hearing and for incorporating that input into decisions or recommendations
- Special efforts to engage caregivers in the review or hearing process, for example, developing trainings on, or written materials about, their role
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's capacity to involve caregivers in hearings and reviews
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's efforts to involve caregivers in hearings and reviews
- Promising practices in this area

C. Quality Assurance System

1. Discuss how the State has complied with the requirement at section 471 (a)(22) of the Social Security Act to develop and implement standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety, and any effects of implementing the standards to date.

Examine the standards implemented to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services and the effects of implementing the standards to date, and describe how these standards have affected outcomes for children and families. Then, using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to comply with the requirement to develop and implement standards:

- State-developed standards and procedures for monitoring services
- System for measuring differences in the quality of care for/outcomes of children served by the agency following the implementation of the standards (and the improvements achieved, as applicable)
- Lessons learned about the standards during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the standards
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

2. Discuss the effectiveness of the agency's quality assurance system in helping to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for children served by the agency and their families in all jurisdictions of the State. In responding, discuss the jurisdictions in the State covered by the quality assurance procedures, the capacity of the system to evaluate the adequacy and quality of the State's child and family services system, and its capacity to produce information leading to program improvements. (Note: The quality assurance system referred to in this question refers to the State's quality assurance system as described in the State's Child and Family Services Plan [CFSP].)

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's quality assurance system:

- State's approach to conducting quality assurance activities (for example, type and frequency of reviews and conducted by whom)
- Methods for evaluating whether services to families are in compliance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and support child safety, permanency, and well-being
- Capacity of the quality assurance system to comprehensively assess systemic factors
- Involvement of service providers, parents, and other service consumers in the quality assurance process
- State procedures for using information from the quality assurance reviews to guide decision-making, policy changes, or internal program improvement efforts
- Lessons learned about the quality assurance system during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Effectiveness of the quality assurance system
- Promising practices in this area

D. Staff and Provider Training

1. Citing any data available to the State on the numbers and timeframes of staff trained, discuss the effectiveness of the State's initial and ongoing training for all child welfare staff employed by the agency that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide training to staff:

- State policies or procedures for ensuring that staff receive training to promote competency in the areas of Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) principles (for example, creating positive safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families)
- State training plan (how developed, updated, and evaluated, and by whom)
- Preservice and inservice training offered (topics, timeframes, required number of hours, availability of continuing education units)
- Content focus (subject) and type of training (for example, information sharing or skill building) offered
- Types of training offered to staff by position
- Staff development plans (are these required, and if so what areas must they address)
- Training data available (for example, the number of staff trained during specific timeframes on specific topics) and capacity to track that staff are meeting State training requirements
- Process for developing, evaluating, and updating the training curriculum for staff
- Method for delivering training to staff (how, when, and where)
- Process for determining whether the trainings offered address the needs of staff, including identifying the need for additional training

- Lessons learned about staff training during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the staff training (for example, describe any barriers to training attendance, efforts to integrate classroom training with on-the-job experience, and mechanisms to support transfer-of-learning)
- Initiatives with schools of social work or other institutes of higher learning that encourage staff to further their education
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

2. Citing any data available to the State, discuss the effectiveness of the State's training of current and prospective foster and adoptive families and the staff of State-licensed or -approved child care institutions that care for children in the State's care or responsibility that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide training to foster and adoptive parents and to the staff of State-licensed or -approved child care institutions:

- State training plan for foster and adoptive parents and providers (new and current; provisions for preservice and inservice training)
- Method for delivering training to foster and adoptive parents and providers (how, when, and where)
- Content focus (subject) and type (for example, information sharing or skill building) of trainings offered to foster and adoptive parents and providers
- Method for determining which foster parents and providers receive which trainings (and how much)
- Process for determining whether the trainings offered address the needs of foster and adoptive parents and providers, including identifying the need for additional training
- Process for developing, evaluating, and updating the training curriculum for foster and adoptive parents and providers
- Process for ensuring that the State's trainings for staff, foster and adoptive parents, and providers convey the same messages and practice principles, and encourage staff, parents, and providers to work in partnership
- Lessons learned about foster and adoptive parent and provider training during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations
- Quality and effectiveness of the foster and adoptive parent and provider training
- Promising practices in this area

E. Service Array and Resource Development

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide services designed to help children safely and appropriately return to families from which they have been removed.

Examine the State's data on foster care re-entries and discuss how the State's service array affects the State's ability to effectively support reunification efforts. Then, using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide services to help children safely and appropriately return to families from which they have been removed:

- Services provided by the State to ensure the safe and timely reunification of children with their families
- Identified gaps in services available and State efforts to address those gaps
- Availability and accessibility of services offered (for example, community-based and consistent with the language and culture of the families being served)
- Barriers to service accessibility (for example, geographic, waiting lists, or fees)
- Method and timeframes for evaluating services (including through consumer feedback)
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's capacity to provide services to help children safely and appropriately return to their families
- Quality and effectiveness of services to help children safely and appropriately return to their families
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

2. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide preplacement preventive services designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families.

Examine the State's data on foster care entries and discuss how the State's service array affects the State's ability to effectively prevent out-of-home placements. Then, using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide placement preventive services designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families:

- Services provided by the State to prevent removal of children from their homes
- Identified gaps in services available and State efforts to address those gaps
- Family preservation and support services provided by the State
- Availability and accessibility of services offered (for example, community-based and consistent with the language and culture of the families being served)
- Barriers to service accessibility (for example, geographic, waiting lists, or fees) and State efforts to address those barriers
- Method and timeframes for evaluating services (including through consumer feedback)
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's placement preventive services
- Quality and effectiveness of placement preventive services
- Promising practices in this area

3. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide services designed to help children be placed for adoption, with a legal guardian, or if adoption or legal guardianship are determined not to be appropriate for a child, in some other planned, permanent living arrangement.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide services to help children to be placed for adoption, with a legal guardian, or if adoption or legal guardianship are determined not to be appropriate for a child, in another planned or permanent living arrangement:

- Services provided by the State to help children achieve permanent plans when reunification is not an option (for example, adoption services)
- Identified gaps in services and State efforts to address those gaps
- Availability and accessibility of services offered (for example, community-based and consistent with the language and culture of the families being served)
- Barriers to service accessibility (for example, geographic, waiting lists, or fees) and State efforts to address those gaps
- Method and timeframes for evaluating services (including through consumer feedback)
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's capacity to provide services in support of permanency placements
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's services in support of permanency placements
- Promising practices in this area

4. Describe the extent to which all the services in the preceding items 1–3 are accessible to families and children on a statewide basis.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to provide the services noted in the preceding items 1–3 statewide:

- Procedures for ensuring that the services noted in items 1–3 above are provided statewide, as appropriate
- Methods for identifying and addressing gaps in the service array
- Jurisdictions in the State in which services are not available
- Jurisdictions in the State in which services are not fully accessible
- Barriers to service accessibility (for example, location, frequency of service delivery, diversity of service providers, or waiting lists)
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's capacity to provide services statewide
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's efforts to provide services statewide
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

F. Agency Responsiveness to Community

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the requirement to consult and coordinate with external community stakeholders in the development of the State's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). In responding, discuss how the concerns of stakeholders are addressed in the agency's planning and operations and their involvement in evaluating and reporting progress on the agency's goals.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to consult and coordinate with external community stakeholders in the development of the State's CFSP and agency planning, operation, and evaluation:

- Procedures for ensuring ongoing consultation with external partners (including identification of stakeholders and the method, frequency, and location of that consultation) linked to State plan submissions and other agency planning
- Involvement of community and State stakeholders (for example, representatives of Court Improvement Projects or Tribes)
- Process for continually assessing major stakeholder participation in the consultation process and barriers to their participation
- Method for addressing stakeholder concerns through agency planning and operations
- Involvement of stakeholders in evaluating and reporting on progress toward agency goals
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's procedures for involving community and State stakeholders in the development of the CFSP and agency operations
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's procedures for involving community and State stakeholders in the development of the CFSP and agency operations
- Special initiatives being designed or implemented to respond to community concerns

- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

2. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to coordinate its services with the services and benefits of other public and private agencies serving the same general populations of children and families.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to coordinate agency services and benefits with those provided to the same population of children and families by other public and private agencies:

- Method for coordinating service development and delivery
- Process for continually evaluating the coordination of service development and delivery
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about coordination of services and benefits
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's procedures for coordinating services and benefits (for example, coordination that results in children quickly receiving Medicaid coverage)
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

3. Does the agency have any agreements in place with other public or private agencies or contractors, such as juvenile justice or managed care agencies, to perform title IV-E or IV-B functions? If so, how are services provided under the agreements or contracts monitored for compliance with State plan requirements or other program requirements and accurate eligibility determinations made, where applicable?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's agreements with other public or private agencies or contractors to perform title IV-E or IV-B functions:

- The functions performed under contract or agreement
- Vehicle through which the services are provided (agreements or contracts)
- Method for managing the work performed under contracts or agreements
- Method for monitoring and receiving information about the services provided under contracts and agreements (case management)
- Method for evaluating services provided under contracts and agreements, providing feedback to the providers, and assessing provider responsiveness to feedback
- Frequency or timeframes in which agreements or contracts are modified
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's agreements with other agencies to perform title IV-E or IV-B functions
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's agreements with other agencies to perform title IV-E or IV-B functions
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

4. Citing any data available, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting State plan requirements for determining whether children are American Indian and ensuring compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to meet State plan requirements for determining whether children are American Indian and for ensuring compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):

- Policies and procedures for determining whether children are American Indian and for ensuring compliance with ICWA
- Data that demonstrate the effectiveness of the State in determining whether children are American Indian and for ensuring compliance with ICWA
- Extent to which American Indian children and families receive child welfare services in the State (those from federally recognized Tribes within the State and those from other State Tribes)
- Information on the American Indian population served by the State (for example, how many Tribes, number of children)
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's compliance with ICWA requirements
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's compliance with ICWA requirements
- Promising practices in this area

G. Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing, Approval, and Recruitment

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the requirement to establish and maintain standards for foster family homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions in which children served by the agency are placed.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to establish and maintain standards for foster family homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions:

- Major areas covered by the State's licensing and approval standards, for example, home/facilities, income, or parental capacity requirements
- Gaps in the State's licensing and approval standards
- Licensing areas that may serve as barriers to recruiting potential foster or adoptive parents
- Length of time that the licensing standards for foster homes, adoptive homes, and facilities have been in effect
- Schedule on which licensing standards are reviewed and updated, including if this process is done through public forums, to address legislative or programmatic changes, and to ensure the State's use of quality caregivers
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's standards for foster family homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's standards for foster family homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

2. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to ensure that the State's licensure standards are applied equally to all foster and adoptive homes and child care institutions that serve children in the State's care or custody.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to uniformly apply licensing standards:

- Methods for ensuring equitable application of licensing and approval standards to all foster and adoptive families and facilities (including relative and non-relative caregivers)
- Methods for assessing the effect on relative caregivers and the agency of uniformly applying standards
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's capacity to apply standards uniformly
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's uniform application of standards
- State's process for re-licensure and information on State's ability to ensure timeliness of re-licensure
- Promising practices in this area
- Mechanism for linking this systemic factor to the State's efforts to conduct continuous quality assurance

3. Citing any licensure or safety data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirements to conduct criminal background clearances on prospective foster and adoptive families, including those being licensed or approved by private agencies in the State. How does the State address safety considerations with respect to the staff of child care institutions and foster and adoptive families (if the agency has opted not to conduct criminal background clearances on foster care and adoptive families)?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to conduct criminal background clearances on prospective foster and adoptive families (including those being licensed and approved by private agencies in the State):

- System for conducting criminal background checks
- Effectiveness of the State's criminal background checks (for example, does the system operate efficiently)
- Degree to which criminal background checks have been conducted for all approved/licensed foster and adoptive families and staff of child care facilities
- Methods for addressing safety considerations for children with respect to the staff of child care institutions and foster and adoptive families when the agency has not opted to conduct criminal background clearances
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's system for conducting criminal background checks
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's system for conducting criminal background checks
- Promising practices in this area

4. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families that represent the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed, including the effectiveness of the State's official recruitment plan.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families that represent the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed:

- Process for recruiting foster and adoptive families (major recruitment efforts and methods for locating families), especially with regard to ensuring a pool of foster and adoptive families that is ethnically and racially diverse and includes families able to support children with special needs
- Process for retaining foster and adoptive families
- Process for evaluating the effectiveness of the State's official recruitment and retention plan/activities (diversity and number of foster and adoptive families recruited and retained), and the degree of effectiveness demonstrated
- Data showing the composition of the State's foster care and adoptive caseloads in comparison to the numbers of available foster care and adoptive families
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's ability to recruit and retain an ethnically and racially diverse pool of foster and adoptive families
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's system for recruiting and retaining an ethnically and racially diverse pool of foster and adoptive families
- Promising practices in this area

5. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to recruit and use adoptive families for waiting children across State or other jurisdictional boundaries. In responding, consider relevant agency policies, timeframes for initiating recruitment activities, and specific methods.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to recruit and use adoptive families for children who are waiting for placement:

- Recruitment methods for addressing the needs of children who require placement in close proximity to their original community
- Recruitment methods for addressing the needs of children who might be placed in another jurisdiction (for example, another county or State)
- Methods for measuring the State's effectiveness in meeting the needs of children waiting for placement in close proximity to their original community
- Methods for measuring the State's effectiveness in recruiting placements in other jurisdictions
- Lessons learned during the Statewide Assessment focus groups, interviews, and consultations about the State's ability to recruit adoptive families from within the State and from other jurisdictions
- Quality and effectiveness of the State's system for recruiting adoptive families from within the State and from other jurisdictions
- Promising practices in this area

Section III - Safety and Permanency Data

I. CHILD SAFETY PROFILE	Calendar Year XXXX						Calendar Year XXXX						Calendar Year XXXX					
	Reports	%	Duplic. Chn. ²	%	Uniq Chn. ²	%	Reports	%	Duplic Chn. ²	%	Uniq Chn. ²	%	Reports	%	Duplic Chn. ²	%	Uniq Chn. ²	%
I. Total CA/N Reports Disposed ¹																		
II. Disposition of CA/N Reports ³																		
Substantiated & Indicated																		
Unsubstantiated																		
Other																		
III. Child Cases Opened for Services ⁴																		
IV. Children Entering Care Based on CA/N Report ⁵																		
V. Child Fatalities ⁶																		
STATEWIDE AGGREGATE DATA USED TO DETERMINE SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY																		
VI. Recurrence of Maltreatment ⁷																		
VII. Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care ⁸																		

Footnotes To Data Elements In Child Safety Profile

1. The data element “Total CA/N Reports Disposed” is based on the reports received in the State that received a disposition in the reporting period under review. The number shown may include reports received during a previous year that received a disposition in the reporting year. Counts based on “reports,” “duplicated counts of children,” and “unique counts of children” are provided.
2. The duplicated count of children (report-child pairs) counts a child each time that (s)he was reported and received a disposition. The unique count of children counts a child only once during the reporting period, regardless of how many times the child was reported.
3. The data element “Disposition of CA/N Reports” is based on the highest disposition of any child who was the subject of an investigation in a particular report. For example, if alleged maltreatment was investigated for two children, and the State counts the investigation as one report, and one child is found to be neglected and the other child found not to be maltreated, the report disposition will be substantiated. The disposition for each child is based on the specific finding related to the maltreatment. In other words, of the two children above, one is a victim and is counted under “substantiated,” and the other is not a victim and is counted under “unsubstantiated.” In determining the unique counts of children, the highest finding is given priority. If a child is found to be a victim in one report, but not a victim in a second report, the unique count of children includes the child only as a victim. A child is counted as a victim if an alleged maltreatment was either substantiated or indicated. In a number of States “indicated” is used if a child is at risk of maltreatment. With the agreement of the States, NCANDS has included these children as “victims of maltreatment.” The category of “other” includes children whose report may have been “closed without a finding,” children for whom the allegation disposition is “unknown,” and other dispositions that a State is unable to code as substantiated, indicated, or unsubstantiated.
4. The data element “Child Cases Opened for Services” is based on the number of children with a substantiated or indicated finding of maltreatment during the reporting period under review. (The current NCANDS Detailed Case Data Component [DCDC] does not collect service data on unsubstantiated reports. Starting in 2001, States will be submitting data on service responses related to unsubstantiated reports.) “Opened for services” refers to post-investigative services. The duplicated number counts each time a child’s report is linked to ongoing services; the unique number counts a child only once regardless of the number of times services are linked to reports of maltreatment.
5. The data element “Children Entering Care Based on CA/N Report” is based on substantiated and indicated reports disposed during the reporting period under review. (See above note on service data.) The duplicated number counts each time a child’s report is linked to a foster care removal date. The unique number counts a child only once regardless of the number of removals that may be reported.
6. The data element “Child Fatalities” counts the number of children reported to NCANDS as having died as a result of child abuse and/or neglect. Depending upon State practice,

this number may count only those children for whom a case record has been opened either prior to or after the death, or may include a number of children whose deaths have been investigated as possibly related to child maltreatment. For example, some States include neglect-related deaths, such as those caused by motor vehicle or boating accidents, house fires, or access to firearms, under certain circumstances. The percentage is based on a count of unique victims of maltreatment for the reporting period.

7. The data element “Recurrence of Maltreatment” is defined as follows: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting period, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? The number of children with a recurrence and percentage of all children are provided. This data element is used to determine, in part, the State’s substantial conformity with Safety Outcome #1.
8. The data element “Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care” is defined as follows: Of all children who were served in foster care during the reporting period, what percentage was the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? The number of children maltreated in foster care and the percentage of all children are provided. This data element is used to determine, in part, the State’s substantial conformity with Safety Outcome #1.

II. POINT-IN-TIME PERMANENCY PROFILE	Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX	
	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
I. Foster Care Population Flow						
Children in Foster Care on First Day of Year						
Admissions During Year						
Discharges During Year						
Children in Care on Last Day of Year						
Net Change During Year						
II. Placement Types for Children in Care						
Preadoptive Homes						
Foster Family Homes (Relative)						
Foster Family Homes (Nonrelative)						
Group Homes						
Institutions						
Supervised Independent Living						
Runaway						
Trial Home Visit						
Missing Placement Information						
III. Permanency Goals for Children in Care						
Reunification						
Live With Other Relatives						
Adoption						
Long-Term Foster Care						
Emancipation						
Guardianship						
Case Plan Goal Not Established						
Missing Goal Information						
IV. Number of Placement Settings in Current Placement						
One						
Two						
Three						

Four						
Five						
Six or More						
Missing Placement Settings						
V. Number of Removal Episodes						
One						
Two						
Three						
Four						
Five						
Six or More						
Missing Removal Episodes						
VI. Number of Children in Care 17 of the Most Recent 22 Months*						
	Number of Months		Number of Months		Number of Months	
VII. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care						
	# of Children Discharged	Median Months to Discharge	# of Children Discharged	Median Months to Discharge	# of Children Discharged	Median Months to Discharge
VIII. Length of Time to Achieve Perm. Goal						
Reunification/Relative Placement						
Adoption						
Guardianship						
Other						
Unknown (Missing Discharge Reason or N/A)						
Statewide Aggregate Data Used in Determining Substantial Conformity	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
IX. Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, what percentage was reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal for home?						

X. Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home?						
XI. Of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, what percentage have had no more than two placement settings?						
XII. Of all children who entered care during the year, what percentage re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?						

*We designated the indicator “17 of the most recent 22 months” rather than the statutory timeframe for initiating termination of parental rights proceedings at “15 of the most recent 22 months” since the AFCARS system cannot determine the date the child is considered to have entered foster care as defined in the regulation. We used the outside date for determining the date the child is considered to have entered foster care, which is 60 days from the actual removal date.

III. PERMANENCY PROFILE FIRST-TIME ENTRY COHORT GROUP	Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX	
	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
I. Number of Children Entering Care for the First Time in Cohort Group						
II. Most Recent Placement Types						
Preadoptive Homes						
Foster Family Homes (Relative)						
Foster Family Homes (Nonrelative)						
Group Homes						
Institutions						
Supervised Independent Living						
Runaway						
Trial Home Visit						
Missing Placement Information						
III. Most Recent Permanency Goal						
Reunification						
Live With Other Relatives						
Adoption						
Long-Term Foster Care						
Emancipation						
Guardianship						
Case Plan Goal Not Established						
Missing Goal Information						
IV. Number of Placement Settings in Current Episode						
One						
Two						
Three						
Four						

Five						
Six or More						
Missing Placement Settings						
V. Reason for Discharge						
Reunification/Relative Placement						
Adoption						
Guardianship						
Other						
Unknown (Missing Discharge Reason or N/A)						
	Number of Months		Number of Months		Number of Months	
VI. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care						

Section IV - Narrative Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

Instructions:

To complete the narrative assessment for each data comparison and outcome measure, State agencies should do the following:

1. Describe and compare any changes to data over time, the reasons for those changes, the factors affecting the numbers, and the effect on the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.
2. Describe the additional data, case review, or interview results that could explain the reasons for the numbers or outcomes.
3. Discuss each item even if no change is detected and describe whether or not the lack of change is a desirable outcome.
4. For the data that are to be measured against the national standards, include a comparison of the State's data for the period under review to the national standard and make a determination of conformity. Describe the issue or factors that may have affected the item being in conformity or not.
5. For each outcome, determine if it is a strength, a need, or evidence of a gap in programs or services. Include a description of the efforts, planned or implemented, to address the identified needs or gaps.
6. Use the exploratory questions to thoroughly address each item and to evaluate how effective the State is with regard to each outcome.

A. Safety

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Based on examination of the safety data elements on the safety data profile in section III, and the State Child and Family Services Plan (State IV-B plan), please respond to the following questions.

1. **Trends in Safety Data.** Have there been notable changes in the individual data elements in the safety profile in Section III over the past 3 years in the State? Identify and discuss factors that have affected the changes noted and the effects on the safety of children in the State.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in safety data:

- Notable changes in the State's safety profile, and possible contributing factors (including specific State or regional effects on the data, for example, high unemployment)
- Effects of the changes on children
- Correlation between alternative responses implemented by the State (for example, diversionary or preventive programs) and child safety

2. **Child Maltreatment (Safety Data Elements I & II).** Examine the data on reports of child maltreatment disposed during the year by disposition of the reports. Identify and discuss issues affecting the rate of substantiated vs. unsubstantiated reports and factors that influence decision-making regarding the disposition of incoming reports.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in child maltreatment data (Safety Data Elements I and II):

- Policies and practice that may affect the number and types of reports of abuse or neglect accepted and investigated
- Policies and practice for determining if a report of abuse or neglect is accepted and investigated
- Notable changes in the rate of substantiated/indicated and unsubstantiated/unindicated reports (including the State's timelines for disposing of a report) and possible contributing factors
- Factors that influence decision-making regarding the disposition of reports of maltreatment
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the burden of proof to substantiate cases and whether those have resulted in positive outcomes for children and families
- Factors that may have contributed to an increase in the numbers of reported abuse or neglect cases (for example, a child's death, media coverage of child abuse issues, or other significant events such as local awareness campaigns)
- Correlation between staff workload, turnover, or training needs and the number of substantiated or unsubstantiated reports

3. **Cases Opened for Services (Safety Data Element III).** Compare the cases opened for services following a report of maltreatment to the rates of substantiated reports received. Discuss the issues affecting opening cases following reports of maltreatment and reasons cases are or are not opened.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in cases opened for services (Safety Data Element III):

- Notable changes in the number of cases opened for services and possible contributing factors
- Policies and practice for determining which cases are opened for services
- Factors the State considers in determining if a case is opened for service
- Comparison of the rates of cases opened for services following a report of maltreatment to the rates of substantiated reports received
- Notable changes in the opening of cases following reports of maltreatment (including the reasons for not opening cases) and the possible contributing factors
- Programs and services established to divert cases from agency involvement that may account for cases not being opened by the agency
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the use of standardized instruments that may have had an effect on the rates of cases opened for services
- Staff availability, workload, turnover, or training needs that may have had an effect on the number of cases opened for service
- Changes in the courts (for example, a new drug court) that may have had an effect on the number of cases opened for service

4. **Children Entering Foster Care Based on Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) Report (Safety Data Element IV).** Identify and discuss issues affecting the provision of home-based services to protect children from maltreatment and whether or not there is a relationship between this data element and other issues in the State, such as availability of services to protect children, repeat maltreatment, or changes in the foster care population.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the data on children entering foster care based on child abuse or neglect reports (Safety Data Element IV):

- Provision of home-based services to protect children from maltreatment (new and existing services; availability, accessibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness)
- Notable changes in the number and accessibility of home-based services and possible contributing factors
- Correlation between this data element and other State issues (for example, availability of services to protect children, repeat maltreatment, or changes in the foster care population)
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the use of standardized instruments that may have had an effect on the changes in the rates of children entering foster care due to abuse or neglect reports
- Correlation between the number and type of children entering care and the services available to prevent placement

5. **Child Fatalities (Safety Data Element V).** Identify and discuss child protection issues affecting child deaths due to maltreatment in the State and how the State is addressing the issues.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in child fatalities (Safety Data Element V):

- Agency management of, or participation in, a Child Fatality Review Team (including who participates on the team)
- Circumstances in which a child's death is examined to inform policy or practice to protect children
- Process by which the results of such examinations are conveyed to the State child welfare agency and the child protective services division
- Examples of the types of recommendations received as a result of the examination of child fatality cases and the subsequent changes made to policy or practice
- Number of children identified through this indicator who are known to the agency through current or prior involvement

6. **Recurrence of Maltreatment (Safety Data Element VI).** Discuss whether or not the State's recurrence of maltreatment conforms to the national standard for this indicator, the extent to which the State's rate of recurrence of child maltreatment is due to the same general circumstances or same perpetrator, and how the State is addressing repeat maltreatment.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in recurrence of maltreatment (Safety Data Element VI):

- System for tracking and analyzing repeat maltreatment
- Notable changes in the recurrence of maltreatment and possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Procedure for examining cases of repeat maltreatment (for example by case or aggregate, and focusing on the correlation between prior abuse and current maltreatment, the perpetrator, and the pattern of escalation)
- Percentage of children who experience repeat maltreatment who were previously provided services by the State or others, if known
- Patterns in the circumstances of children who experience repeat maltreatment
- Factors affecting the rates of recurrence of maltreatment in the State
- Level of knowledge of caseworkers about the history of maltreatment at the time of new investigations
- History of maltreatment as a variable in determining whether to open cases
- Use of standardized instruments to evaluate the safety or risk of harm to children and to aid in decision-making
- Correlation between the length of services provided in response to prior abuse and the rates of repeat maltreatment

7. Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (Safety Data Element VI).

Discuss whether or not the State's incidence of child maltreatment by the foster care provider conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Discuss the ways in which the State is addressing this issue and whether or not there is a need for additional measures to ensure the safety of children who are in foster care or preadoptive placements.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in child abuse or neglect in foster care (Safety Data Element VI):

- Notable changes in the rates of maltreatment of children in foster care and possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Policies and practice for protecting children in foster care from maltreatment
- Methods for addressing the maltreatment of children in foster care
- Knowledge of the factors contributing to the maltreatment of children in foster care (for example, lack of support for new foster parents)
- Pattern of response to the reports of maltreatment of children by foster care providers
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, regulation, or the burden of proof to substantiate cases and whether those have resulted in changes in the rates of maltreatment of children in foster care
- Training provided to foster and adoptive parents on subjects such as child care, behavior management, or discipline
- Services to foster and adoptive parents provided by the State or through other vehicles
- Use of standardized instruments to continually assess and determine the safety of children in foster care

8. **Other Safety Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data profiles, that affect the safety outcomes for children and families served by the agency.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the other safety issues not addressed above:

- Other safety issues not discussed in the above sections
- Reforms in child safety policies or practice occurring in the State that may have had a positive impact on child safety
- Methods for periodically and consistently measuring child safety for every child during the State's involvement with a family
- Process for addressing child safety when a child becomes known to the State for reasons other than abuse or neglect (for example, involvement in the juvenile justice system)

B. Permanency

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Based on examination of the foster care data in the two foster care profiles in section III, and the State Child and Family Services Plan (State IV-B plan), please respond to the following questions.

- 1. Trends in Permanency Data.** Have there been notable changes in the individual data elements in the two permanency data profiles in section III over the past 3 years in the State? Identify and discuss any factors affecting the changes noted and the effects on permanency for children in foster care in the State.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in the two permanency data profiles in section III:

- Notable changes in the two data profiles during the past 3 years, possible contributing factors, and the effects on permanency for children in foster care
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the use of standardized instruments that may have affected the data profiles
- Method of using the data profiles to inform State's policies or practice for evaluating outcomes for all children in the State's care regardless of entry date or length of time in foster care

2. **Foster Care Population Flow (Point-in-Time Data Element I & Cohort Data Element I).** Identify and discuss any issues raised by the data regarding the composition of the State's foster care population, rates of admissions and discharges, and changes in this area. Discuss the State's ability to ensure that the children who enter foster care in the State are only those children whose needs for protection and care cannot be met in their own homes.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in foster care population flow (Point-in-Time Data Element I & Cohort Data Element I):

- Population of children in foster care (for example, referred by the juvenile justice system)
- Notable changes in the foster care population and possible contributing factors
- Rates of admission and discharges and notable changes in this area
- Policies and practice for ensuring that only those children whose needs could not be met in their home of origin enter foster care (and the methods for measuring)
- Policies and practices that affect the foster care population
- Circumstances in which children are placed in foster care
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the use of standardized instruments that may have affected the rates of children admitted to, and discharged from, foster care
- Structure of and recent changes to the State's inhome service delivery system that may have affected the rates of children admitted to, and discharged from, foster care

3. **Placement Types for Children in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Element II & Cohort Data Element II).** How well is the State able to ensure that children are placed in the types of placements that are the most family-like and most appropriate for their individual needs, both at the time of initial entry into foster care and throughout their stay in foster care?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in placement types for children in foster care (Point-in-time Data Element II & Cohort Data Element II):

- State's capacity to provide placements that are family-like and most appropriate for children's individual needs, at the time of entry into and during their stay in foster care (including barriers to doing so)
- Notable changes in the data profiles and possible contributing factors
- Range of placements needed by the foster care population and the placement resources available (including efforts underway to address the availability of placement resources)
- State policies and practice regarding making individualized placement decisions or using standardized placements for children entering care (for example, routinely placing children in shelter care or "assessment homes" before other types of placement)

4. **Permanency Goals for Children in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Elements III & VIII and Cohort Data Elements III & V).** Discuss the extent to which children in care are moving safely into permanent living arrangements on a timely basis and issues affecting the safe, timely achievement of permanency for children in the State.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in permanency goals for children in foster care (Point-in-Time Data Elements III & VIII and Cohort Data Elements III & V):

- Policies and procedures for ensuring that children safely achieve permanency
- Extent to which children are moving safely into permanent living arrangements on a timely basis
- Notable changes in the safe and timely achievement of permanency for children in the State and possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Correlation between the State's capacity to achieve permanency for children in foster care and the age and characteristics of those children (including how the State is addressing factors that influence permanency)
- Correlation between the State's capacity to achieve permanency for children and the State's mechanisms for monitoring permanency, for example, periodic reviews, permanency hearings, or quality assurance
- Length of time to achieve permanency goals for the specific populations of children in foster care
- Changes in the court system/practice that have affected the State's ability to achieve permanency for children in foster care
- Changes in laws, policies for children, practice, or training that may have affected the rates of the State achieving permanency for children

5. **Achievement of Reunification (Point-in-Time Data Element IX).** Discuss whether the State's data regarding achievement of reunification within 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home conform with the national standards for this indicator. Identify and discuss issues affecting conformity and how the State is addressing the issues.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in achieving reunification (Point-in-Time Data Element IX):

- Notable changes in the data and possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- State's capacity to support the reunification of children and families (including the use of trial inhome visits and the provision of aftercare services, and the barriers to doing so)
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, training, the use of standardized instruments, or quality assurance programs that may be affecting conformity in this area
- Correlation between the number, type, and length of services provided prior to placement and the achievement of early reunification
- Correlation between the availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of services offered to children and families during their involvement with the agency and the achievement of early reunification

6. **Achievement of Adoption (Point-in-Time Data Element X).** Discuss whether the State's data on children exiting foster care to a finalized adoption within less than 24 months from the latest removal from home conform to the national standard for this indicator. Identify and discuss issues affecting the number of children placed for adoption in the State and how the State is addressing the issues.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in achievement of adoption (Point-in-Time Data Element X):

- Policies and procedures for ensuring that children with a goal of adoption are provided with safe adoptive placements
- Notable changes in adoptive placement rates and possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Population of children free for adoption in relation to the adoptive placement resources available
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, or regulations that may be affecting conformity in this area
- Court practices that affect conformity (including current or ongoing court improvement efforts and their effect (real or anticipated) on outcomes for children
- Correlation between staff availability, workload, or training needs that may affect the State's conformity in this area

7. **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) (Point-in-Time Data Element VI).** Discuss the extent to which the State complies with the requirement at section 475(5)(E) of the act regarding termination of parental rights for children who have been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months, for abandoned infants, and for children whose parents have been convicted of the listed felonies. Identify and discuss the issues that affect timely termination of parental rights, where appropriate, including the use of the exceptions to the TPR provisions.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in termination of parental rights (TPR) (Point-in-Time Data Element VI):

- Policies or procedures for ensuring compliance with the ASFA requirement regarding the TPR children who have been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months, abandoned infants, and children whose parents have been convicted of the felonies specified in the regulations
- Factors affecting requests for TPR in the State and the timeliness of TPR decisions
- Procedures for determining, and the State's use of, the exceptions to the TPR provisions specified in ASFA
- Notable changes in TPR and the possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, training, management reports, or regulations that inform staff of the need for legal counsel, a petition to be filed, or an approval of compelling reasons not to file
- Provisions for enhancing filing of a TPR petition due to infant abandonment or identification of a felony committed by a parent
- Correlation of the population of children in foster care by age and reason for placement and the number and percentage of TPRs filed or exceptions noted
- Effects of the TPR requirement on the permanency outcomes of children

8. **Stability of Foster Care Placements (Point-in-Time Data Elements IV & XI and Cohort Data Element IV).** Using data element XI on the point-in-time permanency profile, discuss whether the percentage of children in the State who have been in foster care less than 12 months and have had more than two placement settings conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Using all three data elements noted above, identify and discuss the reasons for the movement of children in foster care in the State. If there are differences in placement stability for children newly entering the system (cohort data) compared with the total population of children in care (permanency data), identify and discuss those issues.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in the stability of foster care placements (Point-in-Time Data Elements IV & XI and Cohort Data Element IV):

- Reasons for movement of children in foster care
- Differences, if any, in the placement stability of children newly entering the system (cohort data) and in the total population of children in foster care (permanency data) and the possible contributing factors
- Correlation between the population of children in foster care by age and status (for example, referral from the juvenile justice system) and the stability of their placements
- Method (computer or case record) for delineating between temporary placements (for example, respite care) and return to current foster care, and actual changes in foster care placements
- Method for identifying planned and appropriate moves (for example, moving a child with a drug problem to a residential treatment facility) and moves resulting from an inappropriate match
- Routine placement of children entering foster care in temporary settings (including the effect on placement stability)
- Procedures for handling circumstances in which the State has children needing placement but no placement resources (frequency and response)

9. **Foster Care Re-Entries (Point-in-Time Data Elements V & XII).** Using data element XII, discuss whether the percentage of children who entered foster care during the period under review who had a prior entry into foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Using both data elements, discuss the extent of foster care re-entries for all children in the State's placement and care responsibility, the issues affecting re-entries, and how the State is addressing the issues.

Compare the State's data to the national standards to determine conformity. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in foster care re-entries (Point-in-Time Data Elements V & XII):

- Extent of foster care re-entries for all children in the State's care
- Notable changes in the rate of foster care re-entries and the possible contributing factors (including how the State is addressing factors leading to nonconformity)
- Methods for addressing the rate of foster care re-entries
- Characteristics and circumstances of children re-entering care
- Correlation between foster care re-entries and the State's population in foster care by age and type (for example, child abuse or juvenile justice; effect on conformity because of recidivism)
- Capacity to identify if children are entering foster care for the same reason as before
- Capacity to respond appropriately to children re-entering care
- Correlation between the characteristics of the prior stay of children in foster care (type of service provided, appropriateness of placement, and length of stay) and the current entry
- Correlation between characteristics of the post-reunification services (type of service provided, appropriateness of the reunification effort, and length of stay) and the current re-entry

10. Length of Stay in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Element VII & Cohort Data

Element VI). Using data element VI in the cohort data profile and data element VII in the point-in-time profile, discuss how length of stay in foster care for first-time foster care entries in the State compares to length of stay for all children in foster care, and the reasons for the differences in patterns, if notable. Examining the data on length of stay in both profiles, identify and discuss factors affecting length of stay in foster care and how the State is addressing the issues. If the length of stay in foster care is different across years in either profile, for example, if the numbers are going up or down or remaining relatively constant, identify and discuss the reasons for this pattern.

Analyze how differences in the two profiles affect the overall rates of length of stay. Then using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in length of stay in foster care (Point-in-Time Data Element VII & Cohort Data Element VI):

- Notable changes in length of stay of children in foster care and possible contributing factors
- State-specific issues affecting the length of stay of children in foster care (for example, recent discharges of children who have been in foster care for a long period of time)
- Correlation between the population in foster care by age and status (for example, referral from juvenile justice system) and length of stay
- Changes in laws, policies, practice, programs, training, or the use of standardized instruments that may have affected length of stay
- Correlation between available placement resources and length of stay of children in foster care

10. **Other Permanency Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data, that affect the permanency outcomes for children and families served by the agency.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in other permanency issues:

- Other identified issues of concern not covered by the data analysis that affect permanency outcomes for children and families served by the agency
- Reforms occurring in the State that are having, or could have, an effect on the State's capacity to achieve permanency for children

C. Child and Family Well-Being

The following exploratory questions are intended to assist you as you complete the statewide assessment by addressing the child and family well-being outcomes:

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the State's capacity to address child and family well-being outcomes:

- Policies and practices for assessing the strengths and needs of children in the areas of education and physical, dental, and mental health
- Systems for recording and tracking identified strengths and needs of children in the areas of education, and physical, dental, and mental health
- Process for continually assessing if the State's education, and physical, dental, and mental health services are sufficient to meet the needs of children in foster care (including gaps in services and efforts to address those gaps)

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Based on any data the agency has available, please respond to the following questions.

1. **Frequency of Contact Between Caseworkers and Children and their Families.** Examine any data the State has available about the frequency of contacts between caseworkers and the children and families in their caseloads. Identify and discuss issues that affect the frequency of contacts and how the frequency of contacts affects the outcomes for children and families served by the State.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the frequency of contact between caseworkers and children and their families:

- Policies and practice regarding frequency of contact between agency staff and children and families
- Basis for determining the required contact standards (for example, related to level of risk of repeat maltreatment)
- Data available on the frequency of contacts
- Method for measuring the achievement of contact standards (including procedures for assessing which and how other variables affect the achievement of contact standards, for example, staff travel time)
- Use of individuals other than State staff to satisfy the contact requirement
- Correlation between actual contacts achieved and staff workload, turnover, and training needs
- Process in the State's quality assurance system for measuring the relationship between rate of contact and child outcomes

2. **Educational Status of Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the educational status of children in its care and placement responsibility. How does the State ensure that the educational needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning and that those needs are addressed through services?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in the educational status of children:

- Policies and practice for ensuring that the educational needs of children in foster care and children receiving inhome services are identified through initial and ongoing assessments and case planning and addressed through service provision
- Procedures for conducting educational assessments and focusing on education needs during case planning
- Educational services available to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services
- Use of educational surrogates/advocates to address the educational needs of children in foster care
- Extent to which the educational records of children in foster care are shared with foster and adoptive parents and other caregivers
- Extent to which case plans address educational needs
- Relationship between the State's child welfare agency and department of education to address ongoing issues related to the educational needs of children in foster care and children receiving inhome services (delineate between formal and informal relationships)
- State's use of an automated system of educational services available (managed by the State child welfare agency or operated by another agency but accessible to the child welfare agency)

3. **Health Care for Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the provision of health care, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), to children in its care and placement responsibility. How does the State ensure that the physical health and medical needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning activities and that those needs are addressed through services?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in health care for children in foster care:

- Policies and practice regarding the provision of health care services to children in foster care (including EPSDT)
- Person designated as responsible for resolving issues related to the provision of health services, for example, the caseworker, foster parent, or other placement provider
- Data regarding the provision of health care (including EPSDT) to children in foster care
- Procedures for conducting health assessments and focusing on health needs during case planning
- Provision of health care services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services
- Requirements for conducting initial health examinations of children entering foster care and for conducting ongoing or periodic examinations
- Procedures for ensuring that the health (and safety) needs of children are considered priorities in planning for children in foster care (in accordance with ASFA requirements)
- Methods for tracking the provision of health services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services (by the child welfare agency or other entity)
- Extent to which the health records of children in foster care are shared with foster and adoptive parents and other caregivers
- Extent to which a child's health and health care are addressed in the case plan
- State's health care system (for example, managed care) and the effects of that system on the capacity to provide health care services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services

- System for addressing the health care needs of children with special needs
- System for identifying and addressing the dental health care needs of children in foster care

4. **Mental Health Care for Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the mental health needs and status of children in its care and custody. How does the State ensure that the mental health needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning activities and that those needs are addressed through services?

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe the trends in mental health care for children:

- Policies and practice regarding the provision of mental health services to children in foster care
- Data regarding the provision of mental health services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services
- Requirements for conducting initial mental health evaluations of children entering foster care and for conducting ongoing or periodic evaluations
- Methods for tracking the provision of mental health services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services (by the child welfare agency or other entity)
- The State's use of Medicaid, managed care, or other supplemental program to ensure the provision of mental health services to children in foster care and children receiving inhome services
- Coordination between the State's child and adult mental health systems and the process for ensuring that children in foster care in need of continued services experience a smooth transition to the adult system

5. **Other Well-Being Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data, that impact on the well-being outcomes for children and families served by the agency.

Using the following exploratory issues, assess and describe other well-being issues:

- Other identified issues of concern not covered by the data analysis that affect well-being outcomes for children and families served by the agency
- Reforms occurring in the State that are having, or could have, an effect on the well-being of children in foster care

Section V - State Assessment of Strengths and Needs

Based on examination of the data in section III and the narrative responses in sections II & IV, the State Review Team should respond to the following questions.

Below is guidance for States in completing Section V, State Assessment of Strengths and Needs, of the Statewide Assessment Instrument:

- V1: Determine which of the seven outcomes and systemic factors examined during the Statewide Assessment are primarily strengths and note them.
- V2: Determine which of the seven outcomes and systemic factors examined during the Statewide Assessment are primarily areas needing improvement and note them. Identify those areas needing improvement that the State would like to examine more closely during the onsite review, for example, to explore possible causal factors. Prioritize the list of areas needing improvement in relation to the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.
- V3: Recommend two additional sites (the State's largest metropolitan area is a required location) for the onsite review activities using the strengths and areas needing improvement noted in V1 and V2. Attempt to select sites in which issues identified through the Statewide Assessment will be present and observable. Note the rationale for selecting these sites; if there are no issues that require further examination during the onsite review, explain which factors the State considered in site selection (for example, to create a mix of rural and urban areas, or to include areas with typical practices).
- V4: Provide comments about the State's experience with the Statewide Assessment instrument and process (this information will assist ACF in continually enhancing the child and family services reviews' procedures and instruments).
- V5: Provide the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the Statewide Assessment process; please also note their role in the process.

1. What specific strengths of the agency's programs has the team identified?

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2. What specific needs has the team identified that warrant further examination in the onsite review? Note which of these needs are the most critical to the outcomes under safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families in the State.

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3. Which three locations, e.g., counties or regions, in the State are most appropriate for examining the strengths and concerns noted above in the onsite review?

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4. Comment on the statewide assessment process in terms of its usefulness to the State, involvement of the entire review team membership, and recommendations for revision.

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5. List the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the development of the statewide assessment (please specify their role).

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